

/The Nomadic Tibetans/

- *563 encampment, or they may consist of a group of friends or relatives.
221 Some go only to the neighboring farmers, but more gain is to be
[437] found in the trade at the border. Winter also is the time for weav-
ing the yak hair cloth, for preparing and repairing equipment, and
for visiting and gossip. The period of high festivity is approaching.
- *563 The traders return from their travels and the nomads flow en
221 masse to the monastery centers for the observation of the mid-
796 winter festival. During the festivals religion is combined with both
792 pleasure and business. Almost every family has its representa-
tives among the monks so that family reunions heighten the gaiety
[443] of the season. Trade is brisk for the monastery centers are also
[584] market towns. Maidens contract alliances with the swashbuckling
young nomads, and some of these affairs ripen into marriages.
Business of another nature may also be contracted at this time.
- *563 Once the spring movements commence, the nomads find it advisable
221 to travel with a minimum of baggage both for actual convenience of
579 movement, and to lessen the loss incurred should a raid occur.
792 Thus advantage is taken of this opportunity to store one's valuables
[488] in the care of the monastery, and more particularly with a monk re-
lated to the owner. From mid-winter until the horses are too jaded
in early spring, the major occupation can only be described as robbery
and attempted robbery. Large-scale caravans from other parts of
Tibet and from China make the most desirable prey.
- *563 Ekvall and Yu reported that the winter grazing grounds belonged
423 to the encampment, and that the territories in which the pastures
861 were located, and assigned, were the property of the larger units
819 (or tribes, as they are sometimes called) consisting of a number of
encampments. The winter hay fields were individual's own property.
- *563 These units might be under the jurisdiction of a chief or they might
423 form a rather loose confederation without marked central authority.
622 In some instances the actual "chief" might be one of the local
[792] monasteries, whose head will exercise civil authority over the
laity. Infrequently a chief might even control several larger units,
in which case he would be referred to as gyalpo or "king." But
even the most nearly autocratic chief exercised caution in asserting
his position, lest a disgruntled encampment, or some tents, might
leave his jurisdiction for the welcoming embrace of some other
chief. The latter would then have complete information necessary
for conducting a successful foray against the first group. Thus,
just as within the encampment, the actual authority in these larger
units rested in the hands of a council of elders, representing each
of the component encampments.
- *563 Although there are clans in Tibet which have played important
614 roles in the history of some of the ruling families, they perform
[621] no major function among the Tibetan nomads. The encampment is
not based on clan affiliation. Such affiliations even cross the lines
of the larger units. (Cf. Ekvall, 1939 and Yu, 1947). The clan